



Position Statement from the
West End Hope in Action Organization
Regarding Preserving Dynamic and Diverse Neighborhoods

presented to the Public Meeting March 18, 2015

The history and people of West End Community of San Antonio are testaments to survival and strength in San Antonio. The roots of the community go back even before the establishment of the city itself and are as widely diverse as any person could imagine. Much of that history is becoming lost in the growth of our city. We, the current residents are proud of our neighborhood and have pulled together in order to make it a safer, more prosperous place to live and raise our families. We are interested in improving conditions in the neighborhood but not at the cost of displacement or the suffering of our neighbors. We wish to be neighbors helping our neighbors to realize a better life.

We have been watching with great interest as the Mayor's Task Force has gone through its paces. The report to the Quality of Life Subcommittee was good, as far as it went but we have concerns:

- that more detail was not presented on policy recommendations.
- There doesn't seem to be an actual report from the Task Force, only a Power Point Presentation
- Citizen input has been stifled, written reports are not included in what has been presented
- There is no process on the Task Force for reaching consensus
- The report that was submitted to the Quality of Life Subcommittee was a report from City Staff and not representative of all the members of the Task Force

In addition, the procedures put forth by City Staff for the process of these two Town Hall meetings appears to be designed to stifle citizen input rather than promote a healthy exchange of ideas. Given the long history in San Antonio of disenfranchising people of color and low income, we respectfully state that more input from those very people must be sought.

We citizens living in the West End, support economic development and reinvestment, but not at the cost of involuntary displacement of our neighbors and tearing at the family friendly fabric of our community.

- We especially support the Policy Goals and Key Indicators as stated in the Task Force presentation.
- Of the Long-term Recommendations we would especially support the Creation of Neighborhood Empowerment Zones similar to those established in Ft. Worth.
- We request that a dedicated funding source for Rehabilitation and alteration of elder-owned housing, be established which will allow for our elderly neighbors to continue to live safe and healthy lives in their own homes without going into debt. This fund must be substantially more than the amount which has been budget for home repairs in recent years.
- Zoning and planning must be geared toward maintaining the general fabric of the neighborhood. Building three story townhouses scattered throughout more historic neighborhoods tears at the fabric.
- Housing Policies do not address the problems of old and decaying infrastructure. We need curbs and sidewalks in our older neighborhoods, water mains and sewers are breaking down.

The residents of the inner city have been paying taxes for many decades and have not fully benefitted from their investment in the City.

Additional Policies and Support from the City in the following areas also need to be addressed if we are to bring about the goals and indicators listed:

- Support for coalition building to improve job quality in terms of wages, benefits, and career ladders, training and education tailored to the needs of the local residents.
- Transportation concerns: ensure that residents of one community have practical access to jobs throughout the metropolitan area.
- Public Health related issues: improve healthy food access, safe parks, and walkable streets.
- Strong social networks that bring neighbors together-whether to advocate for change, or provide support for neighbors- can strengthen community ties and build leadership.
- Support for inner city neighborhoods that wish to become a neighborhood association and recognized by City Government. This should be a neighborhood driven decision, not determined by City Staff.
- Develop a Comprehensive Healthy Development Monitoring Tool to be utilized by stakeholders, neighborhoods, developers, and City Departments

We wish to thank the members of the Mayor's Task Force for their continued concern and determined efforts under pressure to produce a viable product under changing leadership and tight time frames. Their efforts have been admirable. Special thanks to Maria Berriozibal and Susan Sheeran for assisting us and keeping us up to speed on the process.

Chuck Bayne

Treasurer and Acting Secretary, West End Hope in Action Organization